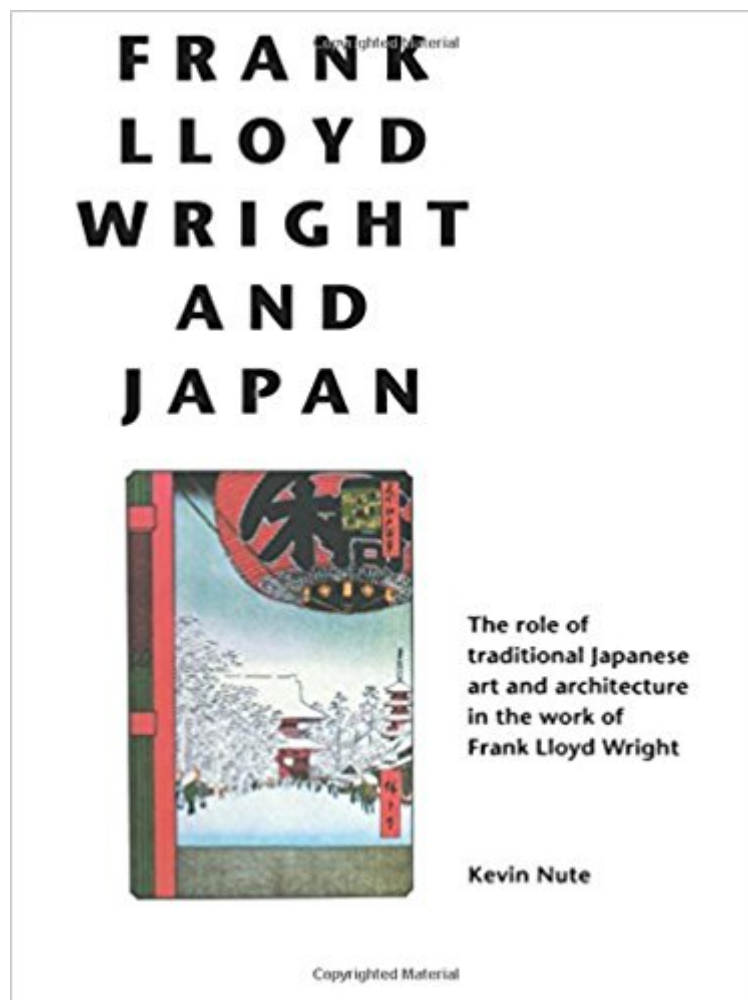


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Frank Lloyd Wright And Japan: The Role Of Traditional Japanese Art And Architecture In The Work Of Frank Lloyd Wright



Synopsis

This book is the first thorough account of Frank Lloyd Wright's relationship with Japan and its arts. It presents significant new information on the nature and extent of Wright's formal and philosophical debt to Japanese art and architecture. Eight primary channels of influence are examined in detail, from Japanese prints to specific individuals and publications, and the evidence of their impact on Wright is illustrated through a mixture of textual and drawn analyses.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

'This is an outstanding addition to the Wright literature. It is well illustrated throughout, with a wealth of new Japanese material as well as the author's own analytical diagrams, and comprehensively referenced. It deserves to be very widely read, not only by those interested in Wright, but as a study of the creative process and the fruitful interaction of two great cultures.' - The Architects' Journal

I was thrilled to receive this volume that had been withdrawn from the North London University Library. The last time it was checked out was June 2006. I am honored to make a place for this valuable treatise on Frank Lloyd Wright's work as inspired by Japanese art and architecture.

For what and who it is for this is a wonderful book

This book answered a lot more questions on Wright's (denied) influences than I expected. It is a

remarkable look into how Japanese woodblock prints and traditional architecture (initially presented by American interpreters) may have helped shape Wright's development, creativity, and specific building designs. Nute has reviewed numerous obscure contemporary sources to help make the case that Wright probably knew a lot more about Japanese art before his first trip there in 1905, when he was already well into his Prairie style phase, than he would later admit. I found this book extremely helpful in clarifying Wright's ambiguities and obfuscations by drawing analogies to concepts clearly expressed by others, who were in effect his mentors. Nute structures his book around the possible early influence upon Wright of four authors, members of the Boston orientalists. Wright may have learned of the abstruse meanings of "organic" art (part to whole) as practiced in the Orient from Fenollosa (1892), who was instrumental in introducing Japanese art to Americans. Fenollosa's associate, Dow (1899), explicated a theory of pattern drawing as the realization of permutations upon kernel line-ideas, rather like some of Wright's house plans. From Morse (1886), and the 1893 Chicago Fair's Japanese pavilion (Ho-o-den), he could have learned of modular design, the expression of natural materials, lack of clutter, and the flow of space in Japanese houses. And from Okakura (1893, 1906) could have come Wright's references to Lao Tzu, Taoism, and the key Void or space at the heart of buildings--as well as an Artist's rationale for the scandalous breakup of his first marriage. Nute also explicates the geometric abstraction Wright imbibed from his enormous and early collection of Japanese woodblock prints. The only color pictures are nine of Hiroshige's lovely prints. This spare use of color reinforces Nute's argument regarding Fenollosa's and Dow's influence on Wright in the matter of "line" as his preferred mode of visualization. Although generously illustrated with old photographs and drawings, the many insights presented here will be more revealing the more familiar you already are with Wright's buildings and writings. A reader looking for proof that Wright was derivative and an imitator will be disappointed. Nute does not find any smoking guns, but makes numerous convincing circumstantial arguments from a carefully calculated timeline that compares Wright's known movements and associates with publications, lectures, meetings, and buildings that Wright COULD have known. Strangely, it appears (from a lack of citation here) that no one knows what was in Wright's own library. For example, what Wright was doing in his oriental pursuit of "elimination of the insignificant," was to subordinate other programmatic demands to the creation of works of art (for which others happened to be paying)--hence the irrelevancy of owners' complaints about leaky roofs, low ceilings, or lack of closets. The difference, then, between an early Prairie and a late Usonian house Idea, is, I suspect, the change in his core Form-Idea of women's roles from social ornament in the parlor to the director of the family from her now open kitchen workspace. However correct Nute (or others he

voluminously cites) may be in ferreting out possible sources for Wright's concepts, Nute does a clear and excellent job setting forth a significant part of the intellectual and aesthetic world of 1880-1910 in which Wright developed. Nute mentions, but does not disprove, alternative antecedents and sources in Arts and Crafts, the Aesthetic Movement, Pure Design, and other Euro-American design currents of the period. He does powerfully demonstrate that Wright abstracted and transformed any Japanese (or other) inspirations in Form (principally plan and section), and arguably transcended them in the Hegelian sense of revealing the Idea in his buildings. Nute's book ends with some extremely useful and well-organized appendices, if you want to learn more of the fin-de-siecle period from which Wright emerged.

Kevin Nute's book, *Frank Lloyd Wright and Japan*, is written with an unusual depth of inquiry. Thorough and clearly labeled illustrations and descriptive text identify connections between real Japanese buildings and works of art and Wright's architecture and design motifs. By examining the influence of Japanese art & architecture on Wright's work, Dr. Nute also has described the manner in which any designer might be influenced by built and natural environments. It's great that this book now is available in paperback, as it will prove inspiring to practitioners and students of architecture - as well as the general public. A must buy for everyone interested in the development of ideas who are searching for a fascinating story about creativity at its best!

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